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Story

Nature and Art

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NATURE AND ART:

A POEM,

BY W. W. STORY.

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A POEM

DELIVERED BEFORE

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BY WILLIAM W. STORY.

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NATURE AND ART.

Weary with toiling o'er the burning sand,
A Pilgrim in the caravan of Life,
Gladly, O gentle Poesy! I stand
On thy green oasis, removed from strife;
And after many an hour of toil and pain,
Within thy living wells I bathe again.

Here warm with love, with heaven-inspiring glow,
From climes ideal odorous breezes blow;
Here hope abides unshadowed by a care,
Here beauty haunts the dim and fragrant air,
Here breathes the Past, in sweet and mellow tone,
Of mighty spirits, that from earth have flown,

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Here calls the Future with prophetic voice,
And tells of lofty and undying joys ; —
And as within this dream-enchanted land,
With Hope and Memory clasping either hand,
I, like a dreamer, hear their magic words,
And let my fingers stray among the chords,
How may I better do than to rehearse
Their golden truths in my unfashioned verse,
And blazoning this device upon my scroll,
"The Brotherhood of Nature with the Soul,"
Give utterance to the various shades that start
In rhythmic cadence from the realms of Art.

Gently as sunshine groweth out of shade,
Nature ascendeth slowly, grade by grade.
Each stage of life a higher growth foreshows,
And holds the germ whence loftier beauty grows.
Upward forever springing from the earth
Life struggles onward to a holier birth ; —
From coral forests whitening 'neath the sea
To blos'my branches of the waving tree ;
From the light blossom fluttering in the air
Unto the living flower that feedeth there, —
Even as if some breeze, that wandered by,
Shaped from its leaves the downy butterfly, —

From the fair Psyche, at its birth a worm,
That creeps and grovels in its sensual form,
That breaks its coffin-chrysalis to wear
Its spirit-wings and feed upon the air,
Unto the soul, that spurns its clay to fly
Through the vast realms of immortality.
In each progression fresh perfection flowers,
With purer senses and diviner powers; —
And as within each simple tone is heard
The faint foreshadowing of the ample chord,
So every portion promises the whole,
And nature prophecies the coming soul.

And man within his spirit and his sense
All forms and hints of nature doth condense;
Imagination, like the shaping sea,
Reason, the air, so subtle, fine and free,
The Understanding, firm fixed like the earth,
The changeful Fancy, cloud-like in its birth,
The fire-like Passion, that through all things swells,
That rarefies and fuses and impels, —
Faith, calm, enduring as the silent rocks,
That brave unmoved the tempest's maddening shocks,
And Aspiration panting still to rise,
As plants and flowers, that struggle for the skies.

When the first breathing of the April wind
Woos the fair blossoms from the trees' rough rind,
And breathes with fragrant mouth upon the earth,
And lures the daffodil and crocus forth;
When from the loosening mould the snow-drops peep,
And blue-eyed violets wake from wintry sleep;
When white anemones are clustering round,
And starry housatonias paint the ground;
When high in air the curving swallow cleaves,
Or flutters twittering round the pendant eaves;
When all that was emprisoned bursts its shell,
And issues forth in the free air to dwell;—
Then like a brother to the trees and flowers,
The human plant obeys the season's powers:
Elysian longings through our being move,
And stir the sleeping passions into love,
And happy dreams and joyous hopes are born,
And life is painted with the hues of morn.

Yes, man in Nature's every shape can trace
The blurred reflection of his inward face,
And evermore he hears with plaintive tone
Her prisoned spirit pleading to his own,—
As if she struggled to become that soul,
Whose infinite essence comprehends the whole.

And thus is man upon his earthly march,
The central point of Nature's perfect arch;
To him all rays converge, from him is sent
That hue, which is its godlike complement.
Still as he wanders here, to him there come
The blissful memories of his exiled home;
Often amid the toil, and dust, and strife,
Clear fountains bubble to refresh his life;
Oft to his listening ear, with silver chime,
Sound the clear bells beyond the walls of time;
From Love's warm rays harmonious tones are born,
Like Memnon's music at the light of morn;
And Hope's fresh breath upon the longing soul
Fans its emotions to a burning coal;
And these fine dreams, whose silent effluence
Perfumes his life, which come he knows not whence,
Which from the infinite grow without his care,
As clouds that breed from nothing in the air,
Demand their utterance, will not be represt,
Beat like a constant pulse within the breast,
Widening till they within their light intense
Circle the soul's entire circumference,
Their coloring through the air of thought infuse,
Invest all Nature with their radiant hues,

With the sure feet of fate pursue his way,
Urge him till he their ceaseless call obey,
Till Art, with spirit hopeful as the morn,
The child of Nature and the Soul is born.

Thus struggling on, the artist seeks to find
The charm, that marries matter unto mind.
With his own life the world of sense he warms,
And Nature to his passion he transforms;
To him her shape is ever fresh and young,
New music lives forever on her tongue,
With every change she weaves a magic spell,
And daily works an endless miracle.

Knit thus together by a secret bond,
The spirit unto Nature must respond,
For some strange spell unites them at our birth,
And shapes us half from heaven, and half from earth.
Though Custom blur the sense, and dim the eye,
And blot out beauty from the common sky,
All from its wretched slavery breaking loose
At times will burst the bondage of its use,
And free in thought respond to Nature's tone,
And feel her throbbing heart against their own.

He, who to Nature lends a reverent ear,
One voice through all her changeful works shall hear,
From great to small shall see one mighty cause
Ordain her circle, and prescribe her laws.
The stars wide-rolling on their pathless course,
The restless sea, the torrent brawling hoarse,
The common earth, the clouds, the open sky,
The circling seasons' sweet variety,
The rounded pebble, and the winged seed,
The idle flower, the never-blooming weed,
All, from the starry sky unto the clod,
Shall whisper of the Universal God.

Though that calm tone be drowned by din and strife,
That softly sings through every phase of life,
There breathes no man whose spirit is not awed,
When Nature rousing with her voice of dread,
Clad in her tempests, in her earthquake tread,
In pealing anthems shouts the name of God.
So have I heard it, when with pulsing shocks
The swelling ocean climbs the naked rocks, —
When the uplifting surf in darkening might
Shakes out its glistening mane into the light,

And combing up along the sunny reach,
Plunges in crowding foam upon the beach.
So have I heard its deep and solemn call
Still sounding on forever day by day,
Where with a thunderous hum the waters fall
Down the abysses of Niagara.

Like hell-hounds from their slumber waking,
And panting madly for their prey,
Their whitening manes in fury shaking
And howling down their rocky way,
From Erie's sleep, in rushing rapids breaking,
Storms down Niagara.
Wildly towards their dread abyss
Hurrying they rage, and foam, and hiss,
Over their shelving precipice;
Yet pausing on those awful steeps,
Firm, solid, and compact,
With heavy plunge, and hollow anthem, sweeps
All — all together in one emerald mass,
The thundering cataract;
And evermore its solemn roar
Peals up the heavens, and down the shore,

While from the unremitting storm
Of seething foam below,
Rises the water's ghost-like form
In its shroud of misty snow.

With thee the wrestling storm hath striven,
The wintry blast hath grasped thee by the mane,
And from the summer's darkening heaven,
Plunging into thy breast its forked levin,
The thunder answered to thy call again;
But undecaying in thy pauseless power,
Heedless of storm, and reckless of the hour,
Deep — deep — with everlasting trumpet-tone,
Thou soundest ever on.

A thousand harvests of the human race
Hath Death's keen sickle shorn,
Since thou wast in convulsions born;
But like a passing mist across thy face,
Year follows year, and age succeeds to age,
And terrible as at thine hour of birth,
Thy hoary locks thou shakest wildly forth,
And scarless, in eternal youth dost rage.

Falling — falling — as if in huge despair,
Thy watery weight descends;
Rising — rising — as Hope were ever there,
To heaven again it tends; —
And Faith her rainbow-bridge uprears
Upon the shattered spray of tears,
And o'er the roaring gulf its arch extends.

Strong as thou art, there is for thee an hour!
There is for thee a law!
Its limits an Almighty power
Around thy strength can draw;
Who forged the universe unto his will,
Can chain thy fury, bid thy storm be still;
He who hath given paths unto the stars,
And meted to the universe its round,
Who clothed thy being with the voice of wars,
Hath set thee thine appointed bound.
Thundering thou dashest on with awful roar,
Yet bendest humbly to His stern decree;
And thou unto His eye art nothing more
Than the frail swallows, that forever soar
Above thy terrors, by his law made free; —
Flames over thee and all the fiery sword,
Thou servest — thou art bondsman to the Lord!

But though to few is given the subtle charm
To crystallize the fluid thought to form,
There beats no heart, within whose inmost cell
Lurks not the witchery of Art's magic spell.
Round every breast some happy memory clings,
Some winds steal Music from the slackest strings;
The coldest heart at moments must aspire,
The stoniest sense hath hidden sparks of fire.
Stray as we may, we cannot wholly roam
Beyond the memory of our former home,
And dreams, that in the guileless soul have lain,
In peaceful hours return to it again.
Though manhood's sky a darkening film may shroud,
In childhood's distance sleeps a rosy cloud.
Some trait of grace we all must have to love,
Some gleam of beauty dawning from above,
Some God to whom we lift our secret prayer,
Some love whose light may shield us from despair.

But ere the soul hath felt the blight of Time,
The human with the heavenly blend in rhyme;
Still to the call of Freedom it responds,
On its own limbs it feels a brother's bonds,

And every breath of Love hath power to win
The musical emotions from within.

There is a grovelling class who would refuse
The claims of Art, and ask it for its use,
Whose souls to custom wed, and dull routine,
Through their dark film behold the fairest scene;
Who cannot feel the same mysterious power
That wields the thunder, also shapes the flower;
Who hear not through the dim mysterious night
The stars make music in their spheral flight;
To whom the burning hope of youth is cant,
Its longing, folly, and its passion, rant;
And while they drudge along with downcast eye,
Sneer at the fools that dream there is a sky,
Like some poor captive, that in stupid glee
Hugs his foul chains, and calls it liberty.

And is it nothing in thy hand to wield
An ægis, that compels the world to yield,
Within its yoke all bounds of space to bow,
And mars all Time to one eternal Now;
To rouse the life-blood in our sleeping veins,
And thrill our pulses with ideal pains;

With pictured griefs to overflow our eyes,
With feignèd joys to lift us to the skies,
The slumbering passions with a word to fire,
And play upon the heart as 't were a lyre?

Oh wretched ye! who would abjure the light,
Whose faith is bounded by the touch and sight,
Whose utmost wealth by numbers can be told,
Whose music is the jingling of your gold;—
Ye may your acres keep, but he alone
Is rich, who has the landscape for his own;
That wealth, which from your splendor lies remote,
Abides with Genius in its ragged coat.
He, whom you sneered at as he wandered by,
Transmutes your earth to pictures with his eye;—
Across the threshold of his narrow home
Angelic forms have not disdained to come;
And roseate dreams, and high enraptured thought
In music tones their lofty themes have taught;
And he hath owned a fair and broad domain
Beyond the blighting touch of care and pain;
And poor indeed in all thy vaunted pelf,
Hath found the highest wealth of man — himself.

Round whirls the never-resting earth,
One gleaming side in sunshine sleeping ;
The sunset's glow, the morning's birth,
Around each day's penumbra creeping.

Along the darkening cone of night,
That far into the distance narrows,
The vivid stars are sown in light,
The meteors shoot their flashing arrows.

And viewless winds forever strive
Fanning the earth with mighty pinions,
The seas they beat, the clouds they drive
Through the blue sky's serene dominions.

With mighty storms the ocean heaves,
With fiery shafts the clouds are riven,
In passionate sobs the forest grieves,
The water-spouts whirl up to heaven.

And evermore in light and shade,
With every varying color changing,
Rock, valley, forest, hill and glade,
Along their rapid course are ranging.

And from earth's myriad different sounds
The sunlit mist of music rises,
Where distance all the discord bounds,
And to a murmur harmonizes.

Over the loveliest spot of earth
Are Grace and Beauty freely scattered,
Yet are the springs of inward birth,
By which their secret roots are watered.

The seeking heart alone shall find
The germs in Nature's bosom hidden,
And to the loving, prayerful mind,
The shape of Beauty comes unbidden.

But happiest is his peaceful part
To whom the lofty task is given,
To plant within the field of Art
The seeds, that blossom up to heaven.

Not in a distant unsubstantial clime,
Far from the common atmosphere of time ; —
Not under roofs where dazzling splendors glance,
The sickly offspring of a weak romance, —

Doth Art, enshrined in artificial forms,
Sit like a queen, and scatter round her charms ;
But in our life of toils, and pains, and loves,
Around our earthly atmosphere it moves. —
Where'er the mourner weeps above the corse,
While stifled grief makes utterance, choked and hoarse ;
Where'er the maiden's listening ear awaits
The loved one's footsteps at the garden gates ;
Where through the veins the sense of loving stirs,
And fuses all this solid universe ;
Where, still pursuing as the phantom flies,
Childhood hunts pleasure through its paradise ;
Where, like the gnawing vulture, day by day,
Pain eats the better part of life away ;
Where blind desire, born in the sweet abstract,
Beats its mad wings against the sullen fact ;
Where they, whose longings up to heaven would fly,
Rot in the toilsome slime of poverty ; —
In every struggle for the truth it strives ;
In every brave heroic deed it lives ;
In every joy it singeth like a bird ;
In every grief its secret sob is heard.

To give a voice to every varying hue ;
All passion unto Beauty to subdue ;

To make eternal by a touch of power
The chance-grown product of the fleeting hour;
To prison in a web of subtle words
Prismatic lights, and evanescent gleams;
On the deep basses of harmonious chords
To build an undecaying world of dreams;
Upon the lifeless canvass to impress
All forms, all tints, all lines of loveliness,
And to compel the solid stone to yield
The Idea's image in its breast concealed;
Such is the aim of Art; and to obey
Its high behest is not an idle play;
For never yet its golden prize was won
By blowing painted bubbles in the sun.
It asks the willing toil of earnest years,
Companioned by its secret hopes and fears,
Born of desire, baptized by burning tears.

Ye are deceived who dream his perfect powers
Untrained, unguided, blossom forth like flowers;
Who deem his life is but a gay parade,
By joys escorted through a rosy glade;
No! he hath never won who never fought;
By toil and will alone is greatness wrought, —

And he, who shrinks those cravings to endure,
Which agonize the heart, while they allure,
In whom no boundless, burning longings glow,
That whirl him onward through all pain and woe,
Let him contented, from afar survey
The Elysian light around Art's summits play.

The craving longing, Earth cannot supply,
The struggling thought, that vainly seeks the sky,
The darkening sense, that borders on despair,
The fatal failure poisoning all the air,
The laboring hours success hath never blest,
The anxious doubt, that gnaws the care-worn breast,
The secret fear, that jars the unnerved mind,
As some fine lyre is riven by the wind, —
These are the pangs, that rack the nice-strung sense;
But Genius is its own great recompense,
And though a wildfire burn within its veins,
For other joys it would not change its pains.
The child of Nature, for his wondering eyes
She lifts the veil from off her mysteries;
His voice to hers in clear accordance rings;
Her beauty is the air in which he sings;
She wreathes his fancy with its fairest hues;
With visionary dreams her heart he woos;

She breathes in music as he wanders by;
She bids the world be picture for his eye;
For him her bounteous arms are open thrown,
Her secrets yielded unto him alone;
While he within her meanest shape perceives
The lingering glory, that God's finger leaves;
And as the Ocean's faint and muffled swell
Haunts with perpetual voice the hollow shell,
So to his inward ear the world around
Is as a shell, in whose fine labyrinths sound
The murmurs of a dim and distant sea,
The secret promise of futurity.

Still the fair promise towers above the fact,
And Hope's great vision dwarfs the accomplished act.
No mortal hand within its art hath wrought
The perfect semblance of the unbodied thought;
Bright as its reflex seem in art exprest,
It shone more bright unfashioned in the breast;
The sweet mirage, through which its image loomed,
The vague desire, whose coloring it assumed,
Seem but memorial twilight dimly fair,
Left by a sunken sun to haunt the air.
Whate'er we do is less than what we are;
Where'er we move, the horizon is as far;

The distant in desire is always bright;
Our Earth to Venus lends a planet's light.

But though Art only wear unto the eye
The dim reflection of a faded sky,
Still doth it beckon onward like a star
From skies where all things that we worship are;
Still is it joy the Ideal to pursue,
And at its skirts to catch a glancing hue;
And though the fleeting phantom still escape,
It charms us onward after its bright shape;
Around our path its dropping flowers are strewn,
We hear before us its inspiring tone,
Just where we tread, its scarcely parted foot
Hath left a print to urge the mad pursuit, —
And as we onward speed our panting powers,
Around us hovering sport the rosy hours,
And pelt us forward in the chase with flowers.

By Love's fine instinct like a magic thread,
Through Nature's labyrinth unto Beauty led,
In boundless trust, in longing unreprest,
The spirit flings itself upon her breast;
Through strange mysterious realms obscurely sweet,
With tenderest care, Love leads our wandering feet;

O'er life she sheds a coloring intense,
She paints with radiant hues the walls of sense, —
And passing through Art's roseate atmosphere
Into the regions of eternal youth,
The form of Beauty that we worshiped here
Drops her dim veil, and welcomes us as Truth.

Thus on the wings of Gladness borne along,
Life to the artist is a festal song;
And living with such forms and shapes alway,
And feeding on such fancies day by day,
What wonder, that the poet should become
Prophetic, hopeful, in life's saddest gloom?
What wonder that the future scene should ope
An infinite distance with a skyey cope,
Where all the shadows that obscure our night
Are melted in the fusion of its light?

Ye, who preside as priests at Beauty's shrine!
Who swing your censers fed with light divine!
Whose visions on Art's painted oriel glow,
And over life a pictured radiance throw!
Ye, who have sung the high and perfect strain,
That lifts the soul, and harmonizes pain!

These sensual chains ye loosen from my life,
Dispel its misery, and dissolve its strife.

Yes, through my being stirs a higher sense,
Quickened by thee to finest influence;
Walking within thy light-enchanted air,
Thy glory imaged round my brow I wear;
And though the power, that made thy works divine,
To humbler hearts hath ever been denied,
Thy mortal hands have shapen thoughts, that shine
Calm as the stars, to comfort and abide;
They linger here to lend us hope and trust,
When the frail lips that uttered them are dust.
The dying slave in them hath found relief,
They have assuaged the agony of grief,
The throned tyrant trembles at their might,
The prisoner in his dungeon hails their light,
The scholar on their pinions soars above,
The maiden in their accents breathes her love, —
And calm, august, majestical and clear,
They shine in thought's undying atmosphere.

Many there be, whose spirit inly stirred,
Hath pressed their life into a cunning word,

And on these signs hath built a world sublime,
That stands unshaken by the blasts of Time.
There, towering mountains on their summits wear
The purple haze of an ideal air ;
There, Wisdom breathes amid the pensive hours,
And sweet success rewards aspiring powers ;
There, welling forth in calm and lucid streams,
Glide the deep currents of Elysian dreams ;
There, shapes majestic of heroic mien,
And eyes of wisdom breathe the air serene ;
There, Rapture soars on never-failing wing ;
There, Fancy blossoms in perennial spring ;
There, dwell the lofty and Utopian scheme,
The earnest thought, the fair poetic dream,
The visionary hope that haunted youth,
The still, serene and quiet face of Truth.

And they, the lofty ones, whose hands have built
The skyey world, wherein the soul harassed
By all Life's barking cares, the spawn of Guilt,
Refuge may find, and sweet repose at last ;
Their names are battle-cries, that urge us on
When faith declines, as with a trumpet tone ;
Their voices calling clearly for the right,
Sound through the noisy tumult of the fight ;

Their thoughts are noble armories of words,
Whose edge is keener than Damascus swords;
Like giant spectres clad in glittering mail,
Sword-proof, fear-proof, unknowing how to fail,
Invulnerable phantom-bands they lead,
Armed for the Truth, in Freedom's cause to bleed,
And through the air their burning thoughts they sow
Round Falsehood, like the Inferno's fire of snow.

Across the waste of time their tones arise,
Their forms unclouded shine before my eyes;—
Now like the sifting wind through sighing pines,
The spirit moaneth through the Psalmist's lines;
There Pindar shoots his meteors of fire;
There blind old Homer strikes the epic lyre,—
While sounds the rushing din of war along
The swelling volume of his sea-like song;
In youth's fresh joyance old Anacreon sings,
And Sappho's hurrying fingers sweep the strings;
There Æschylus, enlaureled, wanders by,
Calm and severe in sculptural majesty;
There Sophocles appears in looser ease,
There throbs the passion of Euripides.
And hark! again from the Italian strand
I catch the voice of Virgil, sweet and bland;

I see the sparkling ode of Horace flash,
I hear the sounding of Lucretius' lash;
Still nearer ring, in terse and mystic chime,
The nervous chords of Dante's triple rhyme;
While Petrarch plains in sweet and lovelorn chaunt,
And Ariosto trolls his gay romaunt; —
And nearer from our Father-land I hear
Tones more familiar, voices far more dear,
And our great brothers greet my seeking eyes,
Who wove our household words to melodies,
Whose blood is running still within our veins,
Whose spirit warms us with heroic strains,
And gives us strength to strike away our chains;
He, whose sweet voice in simple cadence flows,
Like some clear brook, that bubbling purls along,
With flowers enameled, singing as it goes,
Chaucer, the herald-star of English song;
Spenser, whose shafts with roses are entwined,
Shaking his nine sweet bells upon the wind;
Milton, whose voice like some deep organ-tone
In diapason notes goes swelling on;
And mighty Shakspeare, nature's darling child,
Whose world-wide mind no single age can own,
For whom the Muses served, and Wisdom smiled,
Who sitteth on the Olympian peak alone.

And yet once more from the Teutonic strand
I hear the voices of a noble band.
Goethe, in whom the Present imaged lay,
The wise clear artist working in the Real;
Schiller, the prophet of a purer day,
The true and earnest priest of the Ideal. (1)

From thee I turn, for to my listening ear
The call of Music soundeth full and clear;
Apollo's lips are mute, but still his lyre
Trembles beneath his hand in notes of fire.
Orpheus before me moves, and from his strings
Melodious tones upsoar on circling rings;—
Child of Apollo! unto whom was given
The finest gift, that ever came from heaven,
I see thee like a silvery meteor float
Down the dark shadow of the Inferno's throat,
The barking hell-hound droops before thy spell
As thy clear notes in slumberous murmurs swell,
And Cerberus sleeps within the jaws of hell.

Nor thee alone I see, before my eyes
Thy younger brothers in succession rise;
He, who with earnest will, and certain gaze,
Pursued his thought along the fugue's dark maze,

Who swung the sounding gates of music back
On their harmonious hinge — Sebastian Bach ;
Handel, majestic, restful, strong and clear,
The Alpine peak in Music's atmosphere ;
Haydn, the happy bird of summer bowers,
That sings of nature in her sunniest hours ;
Mozart, from out whose quick capricious heart,
A thousand gushing springs of passion start,
Gleams of sweet Love mid hurrying hopes and fears,
And sudden smiles obscured by sudden tears ;
Bellini, sighing forth his lovelorn lay ;
Spohr, climbing on through Harmony's dim way ;
Rossini, joyous Ganymede of song ;
Weber, who leads a spirit-band along, —
A child round whom the fiends and fairies throng ;
Beethoven, struggling like the moaning sea
With the dim longings of humanity,
Wrestling with Fate in vast Promethean might,
And yearning upward for the Infinite.

Spirit divine ! though heavenly in thy birth,
Thou stoopest to the humblest child of earth.
In every passion, in our hope and fear,
Thy mild angelic voice is ever near ;

Thou weavest round the heart thy subtle snare,
And tak'st the spirit in a net of air;
Thy voice can lull life's sullen cares to sleep,
And sorrow in thy smile forgets to weep;
Beside the loneliest one thou hast a place,
The happiest one is happier for thy grace,
And Love smiles sweetest in thy kind embrace.

Prophetic spirit! in thy tones sublime,
I hear the promise of a purer time, —
Where round the soul, unfettered by the sense,
Streams the glad morning of Love's effluence;
Where Hope no longer wears the face of Pain,
And Truth's clear strength can make us Gods again;
Where from the certain bounds of life set free
The Ideal dwells in pure serenity.
There swells the silent Faith, that never dies,
On the deep chords of massive harmonies;
There Aspiration on melodious wings
Soars to the gates of heaven, and soaring sings;
There all the scattered longings of the soul
Gathering in waves of music onward roll
To merge at last in one harmonious Whole.

Nor in the sphere of words and sounds alone
Hath Art its wondrous deeds of beauty sown ;
Its robe of color round itself it wreathes,
And on the silent canvass speaks and breathes.
The fleeting smile, the evanescent grace,
That dawned a moment on the human face,
The sunny gleam of love, that o'er it passed,
As if the soul a passing angel glassed, —
And all the instant's spiritual birth
Within its magic glass are mirrored forth ;
The actual passes like a shadow by,
The shadow stays, a calm reality.

There, in sweet grace and pensive beauty, dwell
The angelic forms, that smiled on Raffaelle ;
There, in prophetic power and sombre thought,
Stand the great shapes that Angelo hath wrought ;
There, unto peace subdued, with smile serene,
Are the calm figures of Da Vinci seen ;
There, in harmonious coloring brownly clear,
Correggio's shadowy dreams of Love appear ;
There, in voluptuous glow and roseate hue,
Breathes the warm Life, that Titian's pencil drew ;

There, wild with joy, in health's exuberant flush,
The allegoric groups of Rubens rush;
There, bathed in sunset, or the hues of dawn,
The dewy landscapes sleep, that Claude hath drawn;
There, blazing whitely through a thickening gloom,
With mystery touched, the shapes of Rembrandt roam;
There, myriad figures move, the spirit birth
Of hearts, that labored on our common earth.

Alas! as I their sounding names rehearse,
Thy memory, Allston, claims my passing verse;
For Death hath taken with remorseless hand
A dearer friend, to swell that glorious band.
Cold is the heart, that once with love was warm!
Hushed is the voice, that once the air could charm!
Powerless the hand, that on the canvass wrought
The hue of feeling, and the depth of thought!
Ours is the grief, that mourns above the bier,
The useless praise, the unavailing tear;
But thou the goal of all thy hopes hast won,
And standest like thine Uriel — in the sun!

Still as I breathe thy name, I seem to see
The pensive grace of listening Rosalie,

The elastic dance of Miriam on the sand,
The fearful vision of The Bloody Hand,
The inspiration of the Prophet's eye,
The dreamer's golden ladder to the sky.

Within yon narrow tomb thou sleepest safe!
The world's neglect thy spirit cannot chafe, —
To thee 'tis nothing, in thy moveless rest,
That no white pillar gleams above thy breast; —
Thou carest not; for what is earthly fame
To him whose soul hath crost Death's dreary wave?
But let it not be spoken to our shame,
That Genius sleeps unhonored in the grave. (2)
Not so did Denmark o'er her son lament,
For him shall rise a costly monument —
Sounded the solemn dirge, the requiem's swell,
The shrouded city wore a face of gloom,
And while the day wailed with funereal knell,
A mourning nation bore him to the tomb.

Nor less I see the mute insensate stone
The silent conquest of the idea own,
Forth from the dark and shapeless quarry start,
And breathe with passion at the call of Art.

Far in the east, half buried in the sand,
The Giant Memnons in the desert stand;
There crouching low the stone-eyed sphinxes lie,
There tower the spiring pyramids on high;
There in their stony chairs, half man, half beast,
In hideous masks, gigantic figures rest;
And groping Art is fettered to a law,
Whose loftiest hope is overbowed with awe.

But nearer through the mists of time, I see
The sensuous shapes of Greek serenity;—
The lofty wisdom of the Phidian Jove,
The Venus, breathing melody and love,
The God of light, with triumph in his face,
The chaste Diana, girdled for the chase,
The dancing Faun, the cloven-footed Pan,
The cymbal-beating Bacchus and his clan,
Laocoon, writhing in his serpent coil,
Ponderous Alcides, resting from his toil,
The Gladiator, straining at his blow,
Or in the agony of death laid low;
And all that marble world, that cannot feel
The chains in which their living brothers kneel.

Again I see within Art's magic glass
Its architectural shapes before me pass ;
The Arabian tent, the glittering Kiosk,
The spiring minaret, the Turkish mosque,
The rounded dome, that in the sunshine swells,
The light pagoda with its tinkling bells,
The Ægyptian hieroglyph and sloping wall,
The Greek's light shaft and leafy capital,
The carved cathedral with its massive towers,
Its oriel windows, and its stony flowers,
The dream of Art in mediæval hours.

Yes ! every age in Art its Faith hath wrought,
The Grecian chisel carved the Grecian thought ;
But what brave hand hath shapen forth in stone
The Christian's faith, since Angelo hath gone ?
Where are the forms, that kindred dare assume
With the great shapes that watch on Julian's tomb ? (3)
Where is the voice, that in the stone can speak
In any other language than the Greek ?

Was it for this, O hearts of Faith sublime !
Ye shaped those works that seem to threaten Time ?

Was it for this ye wrought in patient power
To rear on Nature's soil the Ideal flower?
No! from your graves in accents low and clear,
Across a century's waste your tones I hear;
In mild rebuke, in lofty scorn ye call,
"The soul that weakly leans shall surely fall;
All that we ever did were but as dust,
Without these simple words — Hope, Love and Trust.
No former age for greatness shapes a school,
Truth is its watch-word — Beauty is its rule;
The seed of Feeling scattered from the heart,
In Nature rooted, blossometh in Art.
The False shall perish, though the age may raise
The specious flattery of its foolish praise;
Yet do not waver, dare to trust to Truth,
Cling fast to the prophetic hope of Youth!
Scorn the base creed, that in despair would cast
Thy spirit at the footstool of the Past!
Press to thy heart all nature for thine own,
And live in Freedom — strong because alone."

Is then the soil exhausted utterly?
Are all Art's well-springs vanished or run dry?
Hath Nature shut forever from our view
Her myriad forms — her ever-changing hue?

No! all those magic tones lie scattered here,
From which the Past hath struck a chord so clear;
Soon as a dauntless hand shall touch the keys,
Again shall sound their wondrous harmonies.

In foreign soil that seed was never sown,
Which when transplanted can adorn our own;
Not in Italian moulds of ages past
Shall the free spirit of our age be cast;
Fair as they are, we may not hope to win
From them the Life whose fountains are within.

Oh rather perish all those works, that shine
Round Freedom's grave, to make that grave divine, —
Perish that fair unchanging brood of thought
Heroic minds in stone and color wrought;
And let their lives alone remain sublime
Like morning paintings on the air of time —
Yes, perish! rather than benumb the powers,
And quell the courage of succeeding hours,
Rather than darken Art in dread eclipse,
And dash Hope's wine-cup from its thirsting lips,
Rather than crush that Faith which can anneal,
And lead us captive at their chariot wheel.

Oh thou! who passest, with enraptured eyes,
Through the long aisles of Roman Galleries!
Who seest those pictured thoughts still fresh and fair,
Live on their wall, and consecrate the air, —
Remember thou the cunning hand of man
For ages wrought to fill one Vatican!
That on its walls are hung a century's spoil,
From darkness saved by many an hour of toil!
That they are all but single works, that grew
Each from a single hand, that dared be true;
That unbefriended each performed his part,
More isolated even than thou art;
That all these mighty works are sketches rude,
Hints saved from Nature's boundless amplitude,
One moment's glance, one faint and wandering ray
Caught from the beauty of eternal day.
Then turn from these to pictures far more fair,
Forever painted on Life's common air.

Fool! thou may'st wander 'neath Italian skies,
And seek for beauty with thy wondering eyes,
But till thy being from itself shall shed
The Light of Life, all Nature shall be dead.
Unto the mean soul all the world is mean,
For him no glory wreathes the fairest scene;

But Genius makes the lowliest station great,
Scatters its fragrance in the path of Fate,
And in its dungeon sits in regal state.
It asks no vague and visionary time,
No stale convention, no ideal clime,
But in the every-day of Life can see
The unblurred foot-prints of Divinity.
High though it be, of a celestial birth,
Its feet are not too tender for our earth;
Here in the Present it can live and act,
Lend its warm life to every common fact,
And fighting undismayed in Freedom's van,
Lead on the noble brotherhood of man.

Yes, nothing is so low, as not to be
Made glorious by a brave sincerity;
No time can ever be too late for him,
Whose will is firm, whose trust is never dim;
The palm and laurel bloom but for the brave,
But fear pronounces doom, and chains the slave;
We in our secret bosom carry fate,
And they command it, who are truly great.

To-day is new, its tale was never told,
Still in its breast some secret doth it hold;

I hear it in the clattering mill-wheel stir,
In the swift loom, the dizzy spindles' whir,
In the red flames, that choke the furnace gorge,
In the loud hammers clanging at the forge,
In the great ships, that with the tempest sport,
And fly like shuttles thrown from port to port.

All noble character is but the wraith
Of an inflexible abiding faith;
How may the mind in which great visions be,
Dispute the splendor of their majesty?
How shall he blench before a craven fear
Who lists their voices awful and austere?
The mean and weak may crouch to empty rules,
Forgetting man while worshiping his tools;
Let them upon the skirts of genius cling,
And ape its step, and drivel as they sing.
But he, to whom the august truth shall come,
Must plead its cause, despite of martyrdom;
This from the fagot's flame the heat can steal,
This dulls the axe, and stays the torturing wheel,
This feeds the soul with consecrated bread,
This makes the dungeon-floor a downy bed;

And though the whole world threatening should rise,
And shake aloft its bloody scourge and chains,
Who has God's message will its threats despise,
And walk triumphant through its sternest pains.

So long as Art shall tamely creep and crouch,
Slave of another's power, another's touch,
Plunderer of wealth a previous age amassed,
Copyist and follower, thieving from the Past,
So long with draggled flight it can but creep,
Where once its wing against the sky could sweep.

But no! this shall not be! Art shall arise
Hopeful and faithful to its destinies.
Do thou, my country, from its sleeping trance
Call back the life to glad its countenance;
The shackles of a slavish custom break,
Teach it in Freedom's well its thirst to slake,
In its own life and thought its glory seek,
Not from the Italian borrowed, nor the Greek.

Oh! sleep no more o'ershadowed by the Past!
From thy cramped limbs the broken fetters cast!
Rouse from thy lethargy, with filmless eyes
Behold the pageant, that around thee lies!

It was no fairer age, no sunnier clime,
From which the Italian drew a life sublime.
Gleams not the burning morning here as there?
Sleeps not the thickening evening in our air?
Lies not the deep blue distance of the night
Above us, dusted with its starry light?
Stir not the whispering pines in every breeze?
Beat not the pulses of the surging seas?
Rise not the mountain-tops the sky to greet?
Bloom not the wild-flowers all around our feet?
Flash not the lightnings at the thunder's call,
Rend the huge rock, and crack the sky's black wall?
Doth not all nature, terrible or mild,
Compass around the frailest earthly child?
Nor this alone, the agony of pain,
The bliss of love, that moulds the world again;
Revenge and hate and jealousy and scorn,
Are not these passions in our bosoms born?
Do we not mourn above the dying bed?
Fall not grief's bitter tears upon our bread?
Are there not life and death and hope and joy?
The gray-haired father, and the full-cheeked boy?
Doth not the striving heart in passion burn?
Doth not the soul in heavenward longings yearn?

Are there not thousand hearts, the sport of chance,
Strangled within the coil of circumstance?

Alas! my country, while tumultuous brawls
And noisy factions shake thy council halls;
While Truth and Honor, stricken in the strife,
Fall 'neath the bullet and the bowie-knife;
While at thy seats of Justice murder shrieks,
And red with blood the assassin's dagger reeks;
While power by office buys its venal tribes,
And soils the Nation's honor with its bribes;
While faithful Virtue, that abjures a price,
Is trampled down beneath the feet of Vice;
While over Freedom's soil, uplifted, waves
The keen lash clotted with the blood of slaves,
And their long shriek, and agonizing cry
Chime with their masters' cheers for Liberty;
While vice and crime corrupt the Nation's heart,
Oh! where shall Truth find refuge but in Art?
There let her flee; thence from her lofty shrine
Uplift her voice to chasten and refine;
True to her duty, from the realms of Song
Sting with her darts the festering heart of wrong;

Where'er Oppression with its iron heel
Tramples the rights of Freedom in the dust,
Let her unsheathe her sharp avenging steel,
And wield her lightnings for the true and just;
Where'er Religion languishing may bleed
Imprisoned in the selfish Bigot's creed;
Where'er the clanging chain of slavery rings,
Where'er the foul and barbarous gibbet swings,
Let her the austere song of Justice chaunt,
And Falsehood like a threatening fury haunt.

Oh not alone the task of Art to please;
Loftier and nobler are its destinies;
Hers is the task to teach the soul to climb
Out of the noisome atmosphere of crime;
To warm the heart as by a summer's breath,
And wreath with flowers the bitter sting of Death;
To wake the sleeping powers from out their lair,
And with its lightning purge the infected air;
Unsoiled by Fear, by Custom unbetrayed,
By Love uplifted and in Truth arrayed,
Words firm as Faith to whisper to the weak,
Hopes high as Heaven unto the low to speak,

The doubting heart with earnest words to win,
Pluck from the breast the poisonous sting of sin,
And thoughts, by deep emotion made sublime,
To scatter broadcast o'er the fields of time.

E'en as I listen down Time's narrowing cone,
The voices cheer me that from earth have gone.
From the far east their earliest voice I hear,
Vague, faint, and distant, muttering to my ear;—
Still to the west they call, and evermore
Their tone comes purer, clearer than before.
From Egypt unto Greece I hear them cry,
From Greece to Rome, from Rome to Germany,
Then England calls, and onward to the west
The voice comes pealing o'er the Atlantic's breast;
To us it calls, to us, and yet again
Our answering call shall echo o'er the main;
And Art renewing on our native shore
Shall like a Phœnix from its ashes soar.

From those, who by a craven fear are bound
In one dull ring to circle ever round;
Whose hope is dimmed, to whom the Future lends
No cheering voice, no helping hand extends;

Whose eyes look backward to a vanished age,
Whose heart is prisoned in a gilded cage,
Turn we in scorn, to seek for him whose heart
Was never harnessed to a faded art;
Whose soul from Nature's breast its vigor drains,
Whose open eye into the Future strains;
In whom an upward hope, a faith sublime
Are wings to lift him far above his time;
Who stands upright, with firm unwavering will,
And bravely dares his mission to fulfil;
Whose thought disdains the slavery of rules,
To whom the soul is better than its tools;
Who crouches down before no empty name
Emblazoned on the glittering rolls of Fame;
To whom all mighty voices seem to call,
Who speaks his own truth, speaks the truth of all;
To him again, in strength renewed, shall start
The new-born giant of reviving Art.
He shall create a new and golden age,
From Custom's grasp its spirit disengage,
No more a mourner o'er Art's corse shall weep,
But breaking with a touch its spell-bound sleep,
Shall blast the death-like torpor from its eyes,
And bid it in its living might arise.

August 28, 1844.

NOTES.

(1) In the poem as it was originally written, the allusion to Goethe and Schiller was comprised in the following couplet:

> Goethe, in whom the present imaged lay,
> Schiller, the prophet of a purer day.

These lines were spoken precisely as they were written, and they were written in entire ignorance of the nature or subject of Mr. Putnam's oration. In consequence of some misapprehension on the part of the audience as to the meaning, which I intended to convey, I have, since the delivery of the poem, thought it best to add the two lines now inserted in the text. I by no means intended to depreciate either poet in favor of the other, any more than I should in the case of Shakspeare and Wordsworth, but merely to hint at a characteristic peculiarity of each. Much as I admired the very eloquent oration by Mr. Putnam, I nevertheless differ from him in his estimate of Goethe, and doubt the truth of his prophecy. I hope I may be pardoned if I linger a moment to express a little more fully my views as to these poets — though I can here but hint at them.

Goethe was eminently an artist,— whose creed was contained in his own words: "It is not the knowledge of what *might be*, but of what *is* that forms us." His chief aim was to reproduce and interpret the actual, and to reflect the passions and character of man. For this end, he labored for more than sixty years with an untiring perseverance, and an irrepressible energy. To his work he brought the most comprehensive intellect, the clearest insight, the best trained senses of any man of his age, and wherever his

searching eyes were fixed, their vision was exhausting. He suffered nothing to pass him by without solving its secret. He ransacked nature, and dissected passion. He was indifferent, unsympathizing, egotistical. He was a looker on, beholding calmly from his high tower the battle of Life below, without ever mingling with it; and his reports of it are blinded by no cant, and colored by no prejudice. The gospel which he preached in all his life was *Work*. He never asked whether anything was good or bad, but only whether it existed. Whatever actually existed in life, he considered to be a fair subject for art. So did Shakspeare. Such is he in his writings. His life and character as a private man, is foreign to my purpose to discuss. But whatever it was, the broadest truths, the most experienced counsel, the most acute philosophy, and the most lucid thoughts fell from his lips, and these the world will not easily let die. In every department it may be really said of him, "*nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.*" His prose is transparent, idiomatic, and full of magical light and shadow. His poetry corresponds to Milton's parenthetical definition; it is simple, sensuous, passionate. Nor is his faculty single or limited. We find him, at different times, the scientific inquirer, the naturalist, the philosopher, the historian, the novelist, the critic, or all of these at once, the poet. More than anything, he seems to me like an iceberg, cold, transparent, gigantic, but serene, and glittering with the prismatic hues of poetry.

Schiller, on the other hand, is the Priest of the Ideal; who chaunts the high song of Freedom and Perfectability. He is essentially a transcendentalist, who finds his inspiration in Philosophy rather than in Life. His writings are full of lofty aspiration and noble sentiment; but he is rather an eloquent rhetorician, and a poetical philosopher, than a poet. His best poem, was his Life; which, though it was not stainless, was mostly noble. In History and Æsthetics, he expressed his highest power. His Drama contains passionate declamation, and fine sentiment, but little truth to Life. His aim, continually, was to attain the indifferent and objective position of Goethe; but his nature opposed him. Still, one easily sees the influence of Goethe, in comparing The Robbers with Wilhelm Tell.

Schiller, as an artist, is not equal to Goethe; as a man, he was nobler. He is more enthusiastic, and more sympathetic, but less

serene, and less wise than Goethe. There is in a great measure, the same species of difference between Goethe and Schiller, as between Milton and Shakspeare. But Schiller was not Miltonian, nor was Goethe Shaksperian. Schiller is rather of all our dramatists, like George Chapman, that old heroic spirit of Elizabeth's time. Schiller strove to realize the divine; Goethe strove to poetize the common. Schiller's endeavor was to evolve the particular from the universal; Goethe's to involve the universal in the particular; and, therefore, the former is allegoric and metaphysic, while the latter is definite and individual. Schiller is always drawing down the sky; Goethe is always sustaining the earth. Goethe sings of Life; Schiller of Truth. Goethe strove to explain and embody what he had and saw; Schiller to reach and express what he neither had nor saw, but only longed for. Goethe is an artist looking round; Schiller is a mystic looking up. The singleness of Schiller is more easily comprehended than the variety and complication of Goethe; he is higher, but not so broad and clear. Finally, Schiller sang of moral and philosophic Truth, and Goethe of Truth, as it was colored in the Prism of Common Life.

(2) Washington Allston is buried in the church-yard, contiguous to the Episcopal Church, in Cambridge. No monument has yet been erected to his memory; and the final resting-place of the painter and poet, who adorned American art, and enriched its literature, whose fame is a public property, and a national glory, is not even designated by a stone. It is to be hoped, that this will not long remain so. Let us not forget that some things are better than money and barter. Let us do honor to him who so truly hath done honor to us. Let us remember, that one of the highest safeguards of morality, and one of the surest incentives to action, is the memory of pure and elevated genius.

(3) Upon the tomb of Giuliano de Medici, at Florence, are the gigantic statues of Day and Night, by Michel Angelo, casts from which are in the Boston Athenæum; and concerning which last we would echo Vasari's remark, "*Statua non rara ma unica.*" Michel Angelo is the great Christian sculptor, and the only great mind, which, since the palmy days of the Greeks has em-

bodied the spiritual idea of his age in stone. John of Bologna, Canova, Flaxman, Thorwaldsen, the greatest names in modern sculpture, are merely modern Greeks. Their aim is Grecian; their execution is Grecian; their subjects are Grecian; their thought is Grecian; and they are to be judged by Grecian standards. Sculpture is just the same in kind as it was in the time of Pericles; but far inferior in quality.

In painting, have been embodied the different spiritual phases of different ages. Not only is the grand idea of Christianity expressed therein, but even its different modes of Catholicism and Protestanism. There is this great difference between Grecian and Italian painting; that the Greeks expressed outward life; and that the Italian masters expressed the soul. One was the result of observation; the other of feeling.

While painting has thus advanced, sculpture has stood still. No attempt has been made to embody the spiritual idea of our age, except in some few instances; the style of which is imbued with Grecianism. Modern sculpture is so subservient to Grecian, that the human face is generally treated as if it were of no moment in the expression of passion and character: because the Grecians so treated it. We have thousands of Venuses, but no women. Until the subjects of sculpture issue from the heart of the age, and their treatment is imbued with the feeling of the time, sculpture will never be the great art that it once was. It is time that our artists abandoned the exoteric style of the Greeks, and strove to give their works the esoteric significance, which our age demands. Sculpture is now almost nothing but imitation. There are, however, some exceptions. One man there is to which I look forward with a large hope; as the creator of a new and original style, which has Nature for its basis, and which embodies the life and thought of the age. That man is Hiram Powers; who, in my humble estimation, has shown a better and finer genius for sculpture, than any man since Michel Angelo.

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